

from 20 to 40 feet, but it is very hard from lime and mineral substances. Cistern water is therefore preferred for domestic use. It is the best in all countries, but more indispensable in Texas than in some others.

Hays county stands pre-eminent, we believe, in this portion of Western Texas, as combining the grand essentials of good soil, and sufficiency of timber and water, in convenient proximity. There is also an abundance of building stone, of fine quality, and easily worked. Stone is also used extensively for fencing.

#### POPULATION, ETC.

The population of the county, as we have said, was by the census of 1880 7,555, of whom 1479 are colored. The colored population is relatively decreasing, and the tendency is still steadily in the direction of a decrease of that element. The population, aside from natives of Texas, is mostly from the older Southern States, but nearly every State in the Union probably has its representatives. Foreign-born people are rare, except Germans, who are more numerous, and on the increase, constituting a most valuable element. The total vote of the county, as shown by the combined vote for both the candidates for Governor in 1882, was 1411. The democratic majority is large, but they do very much as they please about political matters, and it ought not to be understood that persons of different political views, who take a moderate course, and are good citizens, are not equally welcome. It is believed there is no disposition among the better part of the people to proscribe others on account of either politics or religion.

#### SOCIETY, SCHOOLS, TAXES, ETC.

The county is noted for the good morals and intelligence of her people, as a general rule. As to education, while good private schools are sustained, there is as yet no well organized system of public schools. Ample provision has been made in the State by law for an ultimate large public school fund derived from appropriations of the public domain, but thus far, through official mismanagement and unfaithfulness, it has not been made available. The signs for the future, however, are more hopeful. Important amendments to the State Constitution in the interest of general education have just been adopted by a vote of the people, and favorable legislation had in the same direction. The present status of the schools of the county will appear by the tabular statement which we publish in another column.

Taxes are as follows: State ad valorem 30 cts, county ad valorem 45 cts, State poll \$1.50, county poll 25 cts, County occupation tax one half of State. Prior to the building of the new court house last year, which cost about \$30,000, the county was out of debt, and some \$1400 of said indebtedness has already been paid. And the county now has a surplus in several special departments of revenue.

#### CLIMATE—HEALTH.

The climate is a great improvement on that of the Northern States, the winters being much milder and shorter, while the summers, although long, and rather enervating, are not, owing to the prevalence of the Gulf breeze, so oppressive as they are, at times, at the North. The nights are nearly always comparatively cool and pleasant. The range of the thermometer is from 20 to 95 degrees above zero—seldom as low as the former, and not very often above the latter. Yet the climate is not as perfect as some portions of California and Mexico, but we think only second to them. During the winter and spring it is the most changeable we have ever known. It exhibits, in fact, all the leading characteristics of the Atlantic States generally, only mitigated by latitude. A polar wave at the North is nearly always speedily followed by a norther and cold "spell" proportionate to the climate here, so that the state of the weather here is a pretty sure general index as to what it is there. Frosts occur down to the first of May, making the fruit crop very uncertain, and necessitating frequent replanting of crops. Thus, between the late frosts and droughts, farming is rather precarious, yet one thing is so adapted to another, that there is generally plenty and to spare produced. And by adapting the system of farming to the seasons, and adopting improved modes of cultivation, no doubt much larger crops may be regularly produced. The rainfall is abundant, were it well distributed, but it is not. The black land, which is prevalent, however, stands the drought won-

derfully, but it is not of so warm a nature, nor so pleasant to cultivate, as it is where there is more sand.

Before leaving the subject of climate, it is but just to say that were one half the preparation made to guard against the inclemency of the weather that is made in colder climates, it would cause it to be almost unnoticed. Really comfortable houses are comparatively rare in Texas, and shelter for animals and the practice of feeding them, even more rare. Yet there are days here in winter and spring—fierce norther and chilling rain storms following periods of quite warm weather—as hard on man and beast as any on earth. Man generally escapes, but the poor animals often perish by scores. But let not the country or climate be blamed for man's heartless improvidence.

In point of healthfulness, this county will compare favorably with almost any other located in so low a latitude. There is scarcely any malarious disease, for there is very little to produce any. Yet people do manage to get sick and die here as well as in less favored climes, and as the population increases, the country will no doubt appear less healthy. Pneumonia appears to be the most fatal disease, though not very prevalent.

#### PRICES OF LAND AND IMPROVEMENTS.

The price of land here, as everywhere else, varies according to the location, improvement, quality and manner of payment. Improved is worth all the way from \$5 to \$50 per acre, and unimproved from \$1 to \$12, and most of it can be bought on time to suit purchasers. But honesty and fair dealing with prospective immigrants compel us to say, that the cost of making common improvements, principally fencing, is such that by the time they are made, unimproved land will have cost the settler not less than \$25 per acre. With the advent of the railroad, however, the expense of fencing and building material will diminish so that farms may be improved at considerably less cost. Heretofore, besides stone, the chief material for fencing has been cedar, for rail and picket fences, but the supply, save for posts, is not sufficient; and pine boards brought from the eastern part of the State, are now found to be cheaper. Hedges of Osage orange will do admirably here, but the people so far, have not had the time, skill or patience to bring them to perfection.

We should state that the prices of lands above, refer to farming lands, and that pasture lands in large quantities are considerably cheaper. Timber lands are worth from \$5 to \$25 per acre.

#### Sections Particularized.

What we have said has mostly a general application to the county. We proceed to make some special mention of some of the principal divisions or settlements.

The railroad, (International and Great Northern) passes nearly through the center of the finest portion of the county, composing the Union creek, Mountain City and Stringtown settlements. Of these in their order.

#### STRINGTOWN.

The first or rudimentary range of mountains which runs diagonally through Texas into Mexico, passes through Hays county. They are continuous, high rolling hills, six to eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. Along the road from Austin to San Antonio, these hills, covered with a heavy growth of cedar and live oak, extend most of the way on the right hand, constituting a sort of back-ground to the lovely, park-like prairies and beautiful farms which lie basking in the sun's rays at their feet.

For sixteen miles, between San Marcos and the Guadalupe river, which separates Hays from Comal county, these settlements extend contiguously, and hence the name of "Stringtown" is applied to this portion of the county. The residences are for the most part built in the edge of the wooded hills, overlooking the farms below. Few countries in the world can surpass this region, and many of our most prominent farmers live in it. Stringtown settlement was the original home of the late General Pitts, a gentleman of note, and his son-in-law, James L. Malone and Samuel Kone, continued to reside there—also John L. Connally, a noted raiser of fine horses, Maj. Hunter, R. M. Caldwell and other prominent citizens.

#### MOUNTAIN CITY.

And its environs, lying in the direction of Austin, ranks among the very foremost divisions of the country in all that is naturally lovely and desirable, and also in improvements and good citizen-

ship. The pencil of the finest artist would fall far short of doing justice to the loveliness of the scenery, while the broad cultivated farms, inclosed by stone fences, and the tasteful dwellings bespeak the industry, thrift and progress of the citizens. Here are a church, school, and a large surrounding population. A sort of adjunct to this settlement are the farm, mills, shops, etc.—all maintained in regular old Southern style—of Maj. Nance, who has also built a handsome school and church edifice. His ranch of 10,000 acres in one body with 6,000 acres inclosed, surrounds his home, where health, peace and plenty perennially reign.

Elm Grove and Union creek settlements are like unto Mountain City, with variations. They lie nearer Austin.

#### PECAN SPRINGS AND SCIENCE HALL.

Represent one of the very finest farming regions of the county, lying on the boundary of Caldwell. Pecan Springs is the name of the homestead of Col. Sledge, in sight of Kyle. His residence is in a beautiful natural grove, in which the springs are situated. They are perennial, and afford an abundant supply of pure water for man and beast, and fill a fish pond below. The colonel possesses a princely estate surrounding his residence, consisting of 6000 acres, of which 5000 are inclosed. It embraces a portion of the valley of Plum Creek, of vast fertility, than which we have seen no finer view in Texas or elsewhere.

Col. Sledge is a Mississippian of a prominent and wealthy family, but came to Texas with only \$3000. He came here from the Brazos, and has only been in the county some half dozen years. He is now the heaviest tax-payer in the county, and is prominent in all efforts at improvement and progress.

Live Oak Springs is a similar place near Kyle, the proprietor of which is C. B. Donaldson, one of our best and most enterprising farmers. Our reporter has never had the pleasure of visiting his place, hence cannot go into details.

Science Hall is the name of a noted academy in this part of the county, which has proved especially beneficial to the community.

#### DOWN THE RIVER.

From San Marcos extends another portion of the country of vast fertility and wonderful beauty, also thickly settled. Unfortunately, however, we cannot go many miles in that direction without getting beyond the limits of the county. But portions of Caldwell and Guadalupe—the Martindale and Jennings neighborhoods, etc.—naturally, by business, and socially, belong to Hays. They once applied to be "annexed" to us, and would have been but for the interference of political aspirants, and we think, upon just principles of "local self-government" ought to be. If we could "swap" some of our mountainous region for these rich and populous portions of our sister counties, it would be a very good exchange.

#### The Mountain Region of Hays County.

In view of the fact that fully two-thirds of our county lies in "the mountains," (a rather rocky region, of moderate altitude, so called) some account of it seems indispensable in a paper of this kind. As the main stock range of the county it is by no means the least important part of it. And farming is also successfully followed in some of the valleys of this section. Our space will only permit a brief reference to some of the more important points.

The towns and hamlets of this region will be found noticed under their appropriate head, so are omitted here. Some of the small fertile valleys are devoted to farming, but the great body of of this region is a stock range, being occupied by ranches great and small. Perhaps the largest of them is that of Hutchins & Good, lying between San Marcos and Dripping Springs, and comprising about 18,000 acres.

Much of the natural scenery of this region has been noticed in other connections, but there are some other features worthy of mention. Among them are various caves, some of them of considerable extent. They are hung with beautiful stalactites, and covered at bottom with bat guano. There are also remarkable chasms or gulches. One of these, known as Dauch's Gulch, is about one hundred feet in depth, with precipitous sides, and approaches the sublime. "Devil's Backbone," just above Purgatory Springs, as you enter Blanco county, is the name given a series of large hills which are unique and imposing to a remarkable degree, and would prove a study of great interest to a geologist. The highest point of the

chain we should say is not less than 500 or 600 feet above the level of San Marcos. They constitute the grandest scenery we have beheld in Texas.

#### Additional Notes and Comments.

Under this head we shall hastily jot down some miscellaneous points which have occurred to us since the foregoing article was prepared.

In speaking of our rivers we might have enumerated the Perdinales among them, as it flows across a corner of the county. It is a wild mountain stream, flowing through very deep canons similar to those of Colorado.

The "swapping off" of some of our mountainous region referred to, had reference to the project of a new county to be composed of portions of Hays, Travis and Blanco counties.

In enumerating the productions of the county we should have spoken of honey. There is no better country for bees probably in the world. There are in the mountains some immense caves filled with wild honey.

The river bottoms as well as the hills, are supplied with timber in great variety. Large bodies of it lie above the junction of the San Marcos and the Blanco.

Apologies of fish, we have seen a cat-fish caught in the San Marcos which weighed upwards of 30 lbs.

We find we have not spoken of our Mexican population. They are here in considerable numbers, and since the Catholic church was built here, they are increasing in numbers, but are rather transient in their habits. They are of the lower class, and employed to do the more common and rougher jobs of work.

Besides the black land, we have several other varieties of soil, all good and productive.

The San Marcos and Guadalupe throughout their entire course abound in fine sites for water power.

It has been suggested to us that our statement as to the price of improved lands is too high, save for quite small tracts, and that the true range for large tracts, and common improvements would be from \$5 to \$15 per acre. Our remarks as to the cost of improvements, also apply to small tracts, and the adoption of the "hog law" in certain sections, and the proximity of railroads and consequent greater cheapness of lumber, would probably in justice demand a considerable abatement on the figures on this subject contained in the body of our article.

A very agreeable feature of Texas is the equality of condition of the people. The extremes both of wealth and poverty are pretty much unknown.

Reptiles and vermin are much less numerous and troublesome than is popularly supposed abroad. We resided here five years before we chanced to see a venomous reptile, though rattlesnakes and copperheads are not uncommon in the mountains. The centipede is the only dangerous specimen of the vermin tribe. House flies are far less numerous and troublesome than at the North.

There is considerable game in the mountain part of the county. Besides the smaller varieties, deer are frequent, and bears, catamounts, etc., are sometimes met with.

The county rests on a limestone formation. Gypsum abounds in places in the hills.

The "ugly names" of certain localities of the county will be apt to attract the notice of the reader. The worst of these is "Dead Man's Hole," which, calling up as it does, a hideous recollection of a dark period, it seems greatly to be desired should be entirely and forever blotted out and forgotten.

The source of the San Marcos, as we have stated elsewhere, is merely a matter of conjecture, but the weight of probability is in favor of the theory that it originates in the Rocky Mountains or adjacent regions. The statement of Bishop Doggett, elsewhere given, that the water has an alkaline taste, favors the idea that it may be derived from the alkali plains in that direction.

#### Adjoining Counties.

Among the advantages of Hays County, not the least is the fact that it is surrounded by other counties almost equally attractive, and is thus the centre of a very large, beautiful and fertile territory. On the north-east lies Travis, containing the State Capital, Austin. Southeast lie Caldwell and Guadalupe, both vastly fertile and more populous, with their flourishing county towns, Lockhart and Seguin, the latter now a station on the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio railroad, while Luling in Caldwell and Kingsbury in Guadalupe are also stations on the same road. On the southwest we have Comal, with its metropolis, New Braunfels, eighteen miles from San Marcos on the road to San Antonio, a place of some 2,500 inhabitants, the centre of a large and flourishing German community, the busy seat of trade, manufactures and industry. To the northwest lies Blanco, one of the most thrifty, romantic and interesting of our Mountain counties. Taking the entire six counties under

notice, adding adjacent portions of Gonzales and Bastrop, and we feel safe in saying that it would be difficult to locate a more desirable and attractive region of country in Texas or elsewhere, extending as it does from the Colorado to the Guadalupe, and embracing the valleys of said rivers and the San Marcos, Blanco, etc., with almost every variety of soil and production known to the State.

#### OUR COUNTY TOWNS.

##### SAN MARCOS.

Situation—Water—Power—Business.

The town is beautifully situated immediately on the San Marcos river, about half a mile below its source. It is located on the International & Great Northern Railroad, about midway between Austin, the capital of the State, and San Antonio, thirty miles from the former, and fifty from the latter. It is only eighteen miles from Kingsbury, on the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio Railroad. It is a thrifty growing town, with almost every branch of trade and industry represented. It also contains six organized churches, viz: Methodist, Christian, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Catholic, besides two or three colored churches, and one principal Institution of learning, lodges of Masons Odd Fellows, etc. The situation of the town is—Coronal Institute—besides other private schools. There are flourishing unlike that of any other we have seen. About one half of the corporate limits lie in the mountains and this is the favorite portion for private residences, being cooler, more sightly and healthy, as well as exempt from mud and dust. From any point of approach the view of the town is very fine, resembling the Swiss villages of the Alpine region, only lacking the towering mountains. As long ago as 1875 a resident celebrated her charms and anticipated her future as follows:

She holds, by Nature's partial grace,  
In Texas broad, a peerless place—  
Here glorious river-springs so bright,  
As pure as heaven, as clear as light,  
Her smiling plains and woodland bowers,  
Vocal with birds and gemmed with flowers,  
Her mountains standing guard around—  
All point to her as chosen ground,  
But not for nature's charms alone  
She stands confessed from zone to zone,  
But for the worth and truth as well  
Of those who live her precincts dwell;  
Her valiant sons and daughters fair—  
In loveliness beyond compare—  
Their various gifts of heart and mind,  
Of manners simple, yet refined,  
These give her yet a higher claim  
To noble and enduring fame.

San Marcos! with prophetic eye  
Thy future progress I descry,  
When kindred souls shall thronging come  
To make thy lovely haunts their home;  
When all the wide spread prairies round  
Shall smile as cultivated ground;  
When mansions fair shall line thy streets,  
And grace thy heights as country seats;  
When ready art and skill shall bring  
The waters of thy matchless spring,  
And forth the sparkling tribute pour,  
As free as light, at every door,  
Till streets and grounds are bright arrayed  
In graceful garb of grateful shade—  
Recalling Eden's fruits and flowers  
To charm the lingering summer hours;  
When Learning's temples shall arise,  
And cloudy columns pierce the skies  
From mills and factories far and near—  
All this shall swiftly follow here  
The advent of the Iron Horse—  
All this, and more, attends his course—  
More than the bard may write or dream  
Waits on the wondrous power of steam;  
God grant that ere another year  
His waking scream our vales may hear!

We need scarcely say that much of the above anticipation has already been realized, and the remainder appears to be in a rapid state of fulfillment. "The advent of the Iron Horse" has revolutionized the place. A new era began with the fall of 1880. Since then old things have been steadily passing away. The influx of "kindred souls," the subjugation of the "wide-spread prairies round as cultivated ground," the mansions fair lining the streets, and gracing the heights as country seats, the bringing of the waters of "her matchless spring" to every door; all these anticipations for San Marcos and vicinity are actually being realized. The "Learning's temples," the "mills and factories," "all this and more shall swiftly follow here"—no further question of it whatever.

But we are getting just a little ahead of our story. We meant to say a word as to our public schools. Our school fund at present is, unwisely as we think, divided up among the various private schools, whose facilities for teaching the additional number of free school scholars are of